



**October 20, 2008**

### **Senate panel votes to protect integrity of ballots**

The Michigan secretary of state could require members of the state police to help protect the integrity of the elections process under legislation approved by the Senate Committee on Campaign and Election Oversight.

Senate Bill 1276 was prompted by a situation in the city of Detroit during a 2005 election, where state elections officials sought state police assistance due to irregularities that required the securing of absentee ballots in a local secretary of state office. While the state police were cooperative, supporters of the bill said it makes sense to give the secretary of state the authority to call upon the state police for help should such circumstances occur again.

The bill now heads to the full Senate for further consideration.

### **Senate approves bill to improve roadway safety**

The Michigan Senate recently approved legislation that will give drivers with a minor traffic citation an alternative to points on their driver's license.

Senate Bill 1066 would allow motorists issued a citation for a minor moving violation the opportunity to waive the points for the infraction if they satisfactorily complete a certified basic driver improvement course and pay all fees and charges associated with the offense.

The course must meet or exceed the curriculum set forth in the defensive driving course instructor manual published by the National Safety Council.

Under the proposed law, the Secretary of State would alert motorists of their eligibility to enroll in a certified basic driver improvement course after receiving a notification from the courts that the individual admitted responsibility or was found responsible of a minor traffic violation.

Motorists are not eligible to take the course if any of the following apply:

- They operate a commercial vehicle;
- The violation is a criminal offense;
- They are guilty of careless driving, a 3-point civil infraction;
- The violation is a 4-point or higher violation;
- They have a suspended or restricted license at the time of implementation;
- They have more than 2 points on their license at the time of the citation; or
- They have already successfully completed the basic driver improvement course (each driver is limited to just one opportunity to waive the insurance points).

SB 1066 would allow the state to charge a maximum of \$100 for the course. All money derived from the course would be deposited into the "Basic Driver Improvement Course Fund" in the Department of Treasury to allow the secretary of state to be reimbursed for administrative costs. Similar laws are on the books in 23 states.

A study in Lake County, Illinois, where a similar policy has already been enacted, shows that drivers who did not take the course were eight times more likely to be in an accident and 10 times more likely to be arrested for another moving violation over a 10-year period.

SB 1066 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

### **Senate passes historic preservation tax bill to help downtown development**

The Michigan Senate has approved legislation that beefs up the historic preservation tax credit and helps Michigan downtowns in their redevelopment efforts.

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, more than half the states in the country have created credits against state taxes to provide incentives for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. The federal income tax credit is worth 20 percent of eligible costs.

Under Senate Bill 973, additional funding would be available for rehabilitation projects here in Michigan. The measure is just the latest legislation to be approved in a downtown development package approved by the Senate. The bipartisan package was designed following several months of Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee hearings conducted throughout the state.

SB 973 now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

### **Measure protecting mourning families becomes law**

Protesters are now prohibited from demonstrating within 500 feet of the property line of a location hosting a funeral, burial, funeral procession or memorial service under legislation recently signed into law.

Senate Bill 1256, now Public Act 166 of 2008, expands restrictions established in current law covering non-federal sites. Several states, including Indiana, have passed similar legislation.

In 2006, President George W. Bush signed the Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act, sponsored by Michigan Congressman Mike Rogers. The measure bars protests at national cemeteries, but failed to cover cemeteries not under control of the National Cemetery Administration and Arlington National Cemetery.

### **Contact information**

*Thank you for your interest in our current state issues. If you would like to receive future legislative updates via e-mail, or have any questions or concerns, please contact my office at [sen22@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:sen22@senate.michigan.gov).*

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